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ABSTRACT

This study examined the sustaining traits of black female doctoral candidates within predominantly white research universities. Four students attending major research universities in the southwestern United States participated in the study. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. The study employed Collins' (1991) outsider-within theory and Willie's (1981) theory of marginality. Collins' outsider theory was delineated into the dimensions of self-definition, safe spaces, voice, and visibility. The findings indicated that the participants sustained themselves in the environment by wearing "masks" to protect their inner self. Specific sustaining traits included self-definition, visceral detachment, knowledge of self as a subordinate in the environment, a culture of dissemblance, and the continuous recalling of familial schooling epistemologies. It is concluded that the findings support Collins' theory of the black woman as the outsider-within and illuminate the necessity of wearing the mask. (Contains 22 references.) (MDM)

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Running Head: BLACK FEMALE MASKS

Black Female Graduate Students in the Academy: Re-Moving the Masks

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Presented at

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in

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Abstract

This study examined the sustaining traits of black female doctoral candidates in white, major research academies. The study was a qualitative inquiry which employed Collins' (1991) outsider-within theory and Willie's (1981) theory of marginality in data analysis. Collins' outsider within theory was delineated into the dimensions of self-definition, safe spaces, voice, and visibility. Findings indicated that these women sustain themselves in the environment by wearing masks to protect the inner self. Specific sustaining traits demonstrated and presented are self-definition, visceral detachment, knowledge of self as a subordinate in the environment, a culture of dissemblence, and the continuous recalling of familial schooling epistemologies. These findings support Collins' theory of the black woman as the outsider-within and illuminate the necessity of wearing the mask.

African Americans have, throughout their history in the United States, "experienced institutionalized or state sanctioned discrimination--as well as social exclusion" (O'Hare, 1992, p. 4). Prior to the Civil War, African Americans were legally oppressed through the institution of slavery. Post Civil War oppression was sanctioned from state to state through the establishment and maintenance of the 'Jim Crow' laws. The oppression that the African American has received at the hands of European Americans is ironic considering: (a) the discriminatory practices meted out by society to European immigrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and (b) the fact that African immigrants did not come to this country of their own free will as did European immigrants. Particularly exasperating to the African American is the fact that s/he continues to experience discrimination, social exclusion, and limited opportunities while European immigrants and their descendants, at some point, achieve full participation in U.S. society. (O'Hare, 1992).

Many discriminatory and exclusionary practices are evident when comparing the educational opportunities, pursuits, and achievements of blacks to those of whites. For example, the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* separate-but-equal doctrine legally supported the exclusion of blacks from white educational settings. Despite the effects of limited educational opportunities through legal educational exclusion and discrimination, African Americans have persevered in the pursuit of education and admittance into the upper echelon of society through educational venues. In reflection, our society has indeed come a long way not only in terms of its willingness to allow blacks a basic education, but in its lessening of resistance towards blacks who seek the ultimate in educational attainment, the doctorate. For, in years past, according to *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (1993/1994):

> There was a quiet understanding in academic circles that limited, and in many instances blocked the ability of Blacks to pursue Ph.D. programs. The unwritten rules of the academic world were rarely challenged for a number of reasons....

> But the most effective enforcer of the codes of race was the unwillingness of any White-controlled college or university to hire a Black professor. Under these conditions, the pursuit of a Ph.D. by a Black person was a futile, if not senseless, act (p. 17).

Today, many barriers that have served to impede the hiring of African Americans in the past have been removed. Even so, the fact remains that few blacks enter graduate school and even fewer pursue and earn doctorate degrees (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, Winter 1993/1994; Nettles, 1990). In 1992, only 951 African American men and women earned doctoral degrees (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, Winter 1993/1994). Carter and Wilson (1992) report that in 1991, African Americans of U.S. citizenry received 933 doctoral degrees. While black women took 548 of these, the American Council of Education's 1993 report indicates that 13, 765 doctoral degrees were taken by women in the U.S. this same year. Clearly blacks, specifically black women, continue to remain underrepresented in doctoral programs, and as a consequence, are severely underrepresented in the professorate. To complicate this disparity, in 1990, predominately white colleges and universities awarded more than 75 percent of the bachelor's degrees received by African Americans. Similarly, The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education reports that in 1992, of the 951 doctoral degrees taken by African Americans, approximately 86 percent were awarded by predominately white institutions.

Although there is a growing body of research that investigates black students in our nation's white colleges and universities, (a) most has been undertaken to quantitatively investigate factors associated with failure and attrition, or to compare the experiences of blacks to those of whites; (b) little addresses the experiences of blacks in the graduate years; (c) qualitative investigations were a rarity; and (d) there is a paucity of research that specifically addresses the black female academic.

This paper focuses primarily on the realities of four black female doctoral students matriculating in white research academies in the context of the masks they don that serve

to conceal their realities and sustaining traits while in the environment. In the following sections, I will discuss (a) black women in the context of historical images and education, (b) the mask, its necessity and study findings within this context.

Black Women: Images and Education

> *Called Matriarch, Emasculator and Hot Momma. Sometimes Sister, Pretty Baby, Auntie, Mammy and Girl. Called Unwed Mother, Welfare Recipient and Inner City Consumer. The Black American Woman has had to admit that while nobody knew the troubles she saw, everybody, his brother and his dog, felt qualified to explain her, even to herself.* (Trudier Harris as quoted by Collins, 1991, p. 67)

According to Saunders (1990), women, in pursuing the basic constitutional guarantees of the United States citizens, have been subjected to "unfair labeling, persecution, and isolation" (p. 1051). Black women in similar pursuits, have been subjected to many, if not all of the same discriminatory practices; yet have had the additional burden of continually struggling with the images that slavery has imposed upon us. These images and those that immediately come to mind when reflecting on the Black woman in times of sharecropping and Jim Crowism, have not only been demoralizing, but devastating in their long term effects. Consistently, Neverdon-Morton (1989) states that the construction of the notion of "true womanhood" was not believed to apply to women of African ancestry. To illustrate, she points out:

> [African American women] could not be viewed as fragile or delicate since they frequently did the same work as slave men. Further, the question of purity in relation to African American women was also a moot one since [they] were frequently victims of sexual assaults by overseers and masters, and since they were required to mate with slave men to increase the slave population (p. 380).

Post-Civil War years found the nation inundated with freed, poor, and uneducated African Americans. During these years, black women were burdened not only with

poverty and illiteracy, but with the oppressive, negative images that had become synonymous with black womanhood. To excuse itself from its injustices to blacks, whites began to instigate and perpetuate the idea that African Americans have little concern for educational attainment (Saunders, 1990). In attempts to dismantle the shackles associated with the negative, controlling images of black womanhood, black women and the families of black girls turned to education. From this paradigm shift, the African American's philosophy of education emerged: education is not for individual gain but for the uplifting of the race (Collins, 1991). Implementation of the race uplift philosophy became paramount for blacks as black women sought to redefine the images of black womanhood and blacks in general fought for economic, social, and educational gains.

As black women and families of black girls had already turned to education in attempts to redefine black womanhood, these educated women became the primary implementors of the race uplift philosophy and, according to Neverdon-Morton (1989), were looked upon to have and carry out special responsibilities to her race. The emergence of this 'new image' for black women, one wherein they were now being held accountable for uplifting and representing the race, resulted in a restructuring of priorities for many black families. These families began actively seeking educational opportunities for their girl children and often times would go to the extent of picking up, packing up, and moving to ensure that educational opportunities would be provided to black females (Neverdon-Morton, 1989).

The Mask

> *n.: (1) cover or partial cover for the face usually made of cloth with openings for the eyes and used especially for disguise...; (2) a figure of a head worn on the stage...to identify the character and project the voice; (3) a quality, trait, appearance, or posture that serves to conceal or disguise (as one's true inner feelings or intentions): pretense, cloak; (4)*

> *the side of a personality that is presented to the world as distinguished from the inner self: a person's public manner or outward bearing: pose; (5) a protective covering, especially for the face.* (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1981)

The Necessity of the Mask

Dubois (1994), identifies the African American as 'One [who] ever feels two-ness-an American, a Negro; two souls; two thoughts; two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body.' Paul Laurence Dunbar, in dealing with the elusiveness of the African American's feelings of duality wrote, "We wear the mask that grins and lies" (Ward, 1994, p. 18). Having been a black female doctoral student in a major, white research academy, I lived Dubois' "twoness" daily. It was precisely from this reality that I chose to explore the mask, as protection, as sanctuary, and necessity for black female doctoral students to succeed in this environment. In many instances, a mask is a grotesque head or face used to frighten or to ward off evil spirits. Yet, the women under study expressed that when in the institution, regardless of their dilemma or perceived reality at a particular time, they had to assume a non-threatening, non-retaliatory, almost expressionless persona in order to promote self, survive, and succeed. According to West (1993), it is not enough for blacks to present themselves as people who stay attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer, namely, its paradigms, viewpoints, and methods. These women demonstrated in many instances that they had to present themselves as attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer and as representatives and recipients of what the mainstream offers. To further complicate this phenomenon, these women, in the tradition of black womanhood, felt responsible to continue to uplift the race and, as expressed by Alice Cooper, that 'When and where I enter, the race enters with me' (Ward, 1994). Not surprisingly, study participants demonstrated their belief that they must, not only present themselves in the academy as prepared, mainstream oriented academicians, but go further and present themselves as

black representatives and recipients of mainstream benefits while uplifting the race and continuing in the traditions of black womanhood. These women, in order to maintain and protect the complex inner self, found the donning and wearing of the mask necessary to survival and success in the white academy.

Musings Behind the Mask: We Are; Aren't We?

> *We are what we know. We are, however, also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves--our history, our culture, our national identity--is deformed by absences, denials, and incompleteness, then our identity--both as individuals and as Americans--is fractured. This self is also a repressed self; elements of itself are split off and denied. Repressed, the self's capacity for intelligence, for informed action, even for simple functional competence, is impaired. Its sense of history, gender, and politics is incomplete and distorted. Denied individual biography and collective history, African Americans have been made appendages to European Americans.* (Castenell & Pinar, 1993, p. 4-5)

The primary theory used in the analysis of data gleaned from each individual case respondent emerged from Collins' (1991) theory of the black woman's outsider-within stance. As this theory is predicated on the assumption that the black woman is able to adeptly move back and forth, in, and between their own social and cultural groups and the social and cultural groups of others, Willie's (1981) theory of marginality also became a lens through which the data was analyzed.

The outsider-within stance

The outsider-within stance is "a peculiar marginality that stimulated a special Black women's perspective" (Collins, 1991, p. 11). This outsider-within perspective has its genesis in the black woman's history wherein she continually found herself in antithetical positions in her community and in society. While in the black family and community she was held in esteem as she was found responsible for uplifting the race. In the labor

market and in the dominant culture, she was placed in a position of servitude and inferiority. Thus, in operating in both environments, she did so from totally different ends of the spectrum. In the black world, not only was she the essence and hub of the family, she was central to the race uplift philosophy. In the white world, however, despite her opportunities as a domestic laborer to observe the European culture and power structure from the inside, the black female was forced to observe from the periphery, participate minimally, and adhere to the posture of an outsider. According to Collins (1991, p. 11), this ironic situation provided "the material backdrop for a unique Black woman's standpoint on self and society." Black men, white men, and white women have not viewed the European power structure from the same "inside" angle/perspective as the black woman (Collins, 1991). Consequently, as an outsider-within the dominant group, her level of awareness and way of seeing reality, has long been beyond the comprehension of black men and of white men and women.

Collins (1991) outsider-within theory formed the basis of a theoretical framework of four dimensions for data analysis. The dimensions are.

1) Self-Definition: The manner of ways in which the participant rejects externally defined, controlling, and denigrating images of her black womanhood. According to Collins (1991), self-definition is the black woman's reaction to being objectified as the Other.
2) Safe Spaces: Those places, internal or external, where the black woman can go and freely express herself.
3) Voice: The identification, access, and use of a vehicle through which the knowledge the black woman has constructed of herself may emerge.
4) Visibility: The black woman's recognition in an environment on the basis of association with one or more of the negative images associated with black womanhood. Black women in their marginality are usually highly

visible because of their blackness. The depersonalization of racism frequently serves to render these women invisible.

Marginality

Marginality, as defined by Willie (1981) is one's ability to live beyond the boundaries of one's own race, social class, and cultural distinctions. The black woman encased in marginality is, according to Willie (1981), able to live in, between, and beyond her own and others social or cultural groups. Willie (1975) in his examination of the marginal individual contends that the marginal black is one who, not only knows intimately the lifestyles of the black minority and who comes to know the lifestyles of the white majority, but comes to know and understand the culture and characteristics of both groups. To examine Willie's (1981) theory of marginality as it relates to the black woman's outsider-within stance in the white research academy, I used an inductive method of analysis and looked at the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of black female doctoral candidates in the white academy.

Approaching the Mask: The Method

> *African-American women as a group may have experiences that provide us with a unique angle of vision. But expressing a collective, self-defined Black feminist consciousness is problematic precisely because dominant groups have a vested interest in suppressing such thought.* (Collins, 1991, p. 25)

The Masked

Four black female doctoral candidates attending predominately white, major research institutions in the southwestern region of the United States were purposefully selected for study participation. These women operated under the pseudonyms of Gwen, Judy, Monica, and Traci.

Study Design and Probing Methods

For this study, I employed a multiple case study design with a cross-case analysis. Data was collected through semistructured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Also used were of interview guides and interview logs. Formal data analysis began with an "empirically grounded approach" to coding (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 57). Pattern coding was then used to cluster themes that emerged from first level coding. Data generated from each case was subsequently assembled in a cross-case construct table (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following data coding, individual case synopses were developed in the context of Collins' (1991) outsider-within theory and Willie's (1981) theory of marginality. Following the individual case synopses was the development of the illustrative narrative (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the illustrative narrative, I worked across cases, enumerating possible sequences, and developed the cross-case analysis. Upon completion of the cross-case analysis, an examination of the data with respect to each research question was undertaken. Although four research questions were posed, findings will be discussed only for the following two:

1) How was the participants' marginality or outsider-within stance reflective of or influenced by their schooling epistemologies, i.e., their view of and attitude towards school as has been transmitted by family and significant others?

2) What are the participants' attitudes and behaviors that indicate that they know and understand the way of life of the majority and the minority as dominant and subdominant culture groups?

From One Mask to Another

The single most important component in qualitative research is the investigator. (Merriam, 1988)

As a black female having grown up in the southern part of the United States, I too have experienced the "tensions, conflicts, joys, sorrows, warmth, compassion, and

cruelties associated with *becomming [sic] a Black woman*" (Ladner, 1970, p. xi). In addition to these experiences, I bring to this study my years of being socialized by my black family and the African American community. Consistent with Ladner (1970), this socialization has shaped my world view, defined my affective responses to the world, and strengthened my resolve and ability to survive in a society that has not made survival for African Americans easy.

While conducting this investigation, I was, as were all participants, a member of the socially constructed category: African American female doctoral candidates in predominately white, major research institutions. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that in a study of this nature, the researcher and each subject has her own assumptions and systems of thought, Collins (1991) points outs that "Black women's work and family experiences and grounding in traditional African American culture suggests that African American women as a group experience a world different from that of those who are not Black and female" (p. 24). Therefore, I bring a black female reality and perspective. A reality and perspective that is of course, one of many black female realities and perspectives and therefore, representative of the heterogeneity of black women. Even so, my perspective and reality is one that is nevertheless tied to the earliest images of black womanhood, the black woman's tradition of struggle and of uplifting the race.

Behind the Masks

> *How does one know when an individual is really an insider and not an outsider in disguise? ...Only then can 'one understand the fine-grained meanings of behavior, feeling, and values...and decipher the unwritten grammar of conduct and nuances of cultural idiom.'* (Collins, 1986, p. 526)

This study was undertaken to investigate the sustaining traits and factors of black female doctoral candidates matriculating in white, major research institutions. Self-definition was shown to be these women's primary sustaining trait.

The Pineal: Self-Definition

Self-definition was expressed in the manner in which these women chose to reject the negative, externally defined images of black womanhood, or resist objectification as the Other while in the white academy. Self-definition emerged as 'the use and continual reinforcement of positive self- and familial-constructed knowledge of self as a means of resisting negative, externally defined images of black womanhood.' Self-definition also emerged as the pineal, or 'seat of the soul' behind the mask. This is to say that self-definition is the sustaining trait from which all others emerge. Although these women believed that the donning and wearing of the mask was necessary to survival in the academy, the power of the self-definition served, in some instances to lessen the wearisomeness of continually donning and wearing the mask, and in other instances, to strengthen these women's resolve to perform and receive a standing ovation.

In examining data within and across cases, self definition was found in numerous comments and experiences expressed by the women under investigation. Although a number strategies to resist externally defined images of black womanhood while in the environment were illuminated, only three will be presented here. Other uses of self-constructed knowledge will emerge throughout this paper. The following sections provide illustrations and examples of: (a) ability to perform while in the academy, (b) the ability to overlook objectification as the Other while in the environment, and (c) institutional affiliation.

Talent: Ability to perform

Gwen made clear her confidence in her ability to perform in the environment early in our interview. She expressed:

> I knew when I walked in at this doctoral program at [City University] [that]I might not have scored as high as the next person on the GRE but there was not one person there that could out perform me.

Gwen goes on to demonstrated her ability to perform in relaying experiences wherein she was "always prepared to respond," and had "read everything [she] could find." She said, "I really prepare myself well. I over prepare for almost everything."

Monica describes her confidence in her ability to perform as a means of resisting objectification as the Other. She reflects:

> I think they knew I was smarter, or as smart, because they would call and ask me questions. They didn't call to give me information, they asked me questions. When you are in a study group it only makes sense to study with people who are smarter, or as smart as yourself. It doesn't do you any good to study with people who aren't. So, part of the problem was the people who made the effort weren't as smart as I was, so it didn't do me a lot of good to pass time studying with them....

In expressing her commitment to continuing to perform as a means of resisting objectification as the Other, Monica states:

> There are lots of times since I got here that I've asked myself, 'Do I really want to do this?' But no matter how bad it gets, I just can't quit. I think I would go to hell and back before I would quit. I might be here 10 years, but that's part of it...I don't want anybody ever saying, 'She didn't make it.'

Brenda, a pilot study participant, in talking about her ability to perform, noted:

> When I look back on what I've done as a doctoral student..., once people get to know me and get to know what I am capable of, it's almost like, if you are going to come negatively, you are going to have to find another way to come because generally, I am very good at what I do and can back up what I can do.

Stage presence: Ability to overlook treatment as the other

All participants, at some point or another, in their perceptions of being objectified as the Other in their respective institutions, refused to acknowledge or react to various incidents of perceived objectification as the Other. Gwen commented, "I was offended...

but I decided I was not going to let that affect me." Particularly illuminating to the significance of this finding was Judy's comment:

> I don't like to step on anybody's toes. I let myself be insulted and offended. That's helped a lot because I'm not seen as a hot head....

Monica demonstrates her ability to overlook attempts to objectify her as the Other by refusing to point the finger at a white, male peer mentor who sabotaged a project she was working on for her advisor. She commented:

> He didn't really give me the wrong information. What he did was, leave out pertinent information that would have allowed me to correctly complete the project. He did this deliberately. And I looked like a fool in front of my advisor.

Monica felt that rather than address this issue with her advisor, she was better off to let it go. She feared that in telling, she would place the white male advisor in the position of having to take a side--that of the white, male student-mentor. As she also perceived that she was continually viewed in the environment as "'the' African American female," 'snitching' would substantiate her objectification as the Other in the environment. Yet, to overlook objectification as the other in the academy, as further implied by Monica, is simply the beginning:

> I don't know if it's true or not, but my perception is that, 'I'll always have to prove myself or justify my position or my experience in whatever company or where I'm going to be.'

Traci's ability to overlook being objectified as the Other in the environment is so Herculean that she makes it a point to never acknowledge perceptions of oppression on the basis of her black womanhood. Her overall comments suggest that other black females in the academy might begin to attribute less-than-positive experiences, not to their black womanhood, but to other institutional dynamics.

Backing: Institutional affiliation

All study participants demonstrated the ability to resist the negative images associated with Black womanhood by constructing and perceiving themselves in the context of their affiliation with the academy. For example, Gwen stated, "[City University] has a good name. By being here, I have gained a network of peers around the nation that will serve me well for the rest of my career." Judy indicates that not only is her institution and program "'nationally renown" with "a good name, the people in this program are the cream of the crop from all over the country."

Monica says that although her department is known for many areas of research, in her particular area of study, "we are probably the best in the country." She further stated:

> I work with an advisor that is one of the leaders in the field, a big name guy. He has all these awards, and stuff behind his name....

Traci is also cognizant of the use of her institutional and departmental affiliation as a means of resisting objectification as the Other and rejecting the negative images of Black womanhood. She shares with me the high rank that her department has in the nation for the quality of its Ph.D. graduates. She says that Nation U is a "school with a good reputation. It's one of the places that universities go to get new professors."

As the above comments and expressions indicate, the pineal of the mask, self-definition, is not only a multifaceted and a crucial sustaining agent in the lives of these women, but an illusive, complex enigma that serves to draw the disjointedness of the internal and external realities of these women into a central point in the inner self wherein the postures of resignation and resistance are allowed to cohabitant. This contention illuminates the necessity of, as Collins (1991) points out, black women protecting the sanctity of the inner self. This is accomplished by the wearing of the mask.

Re-Moving the Masks

> *Of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger.* (Audrey Lorde as quoted by Collins, 1991, p. 98)

The following sections will address study findings with respect to the research questions. These findings illustrate the significance of schooling epistemologies and marginality in these women's outsider-within postures.

The Development of the Mask

The first research question focused on the manner in which the participants' marginality or outsider-within stance was reflective of or influenced by their schooling epistemologies, i.e., views of school as transmitted to them by their families or significant others. Findings were that all participants demonstrated that their marginality and subsequent outsider-within stances were influenced by, or reflective of their schooling epistemologies. The following sections discuss specific findings related to this research question for each study participant.

Gwen

Gwen has, for as long as she can remember, always "loved school." In reflecting on her early years, she observes:

> I can think back to how important education has always been in my life, and it was something for which there was a lot of support when we grew up...it was expected. It was understood in our family that you need to go to school....

She comments further that it was an "understood, unstated, unwritten notion that you would go to school" and that the family and community would support you in whatever capacity they could. These comments and reflections lay the foundation for Gwen's acknowledgment and acceptance of the family's and community's transmissions of the importance of school and education. Additional "knowings" transmitted to Gwen were

that blacks held a separate and unequal status in society. This is illustrated by her comments regarding the town in which she was born and raised. She recalled:

> If you were Black you had this place and you never moved out of it.... At that time I only knew Black or White...the schools were separate, everything was separate.... You grow up with ideas about where you are supposed to be in life as a result of those experiences, but I attribute my attitude now and my attitudes then, and when I entered [City U], to my mother.

However, in this passage, Gwen also illustrates by her comments 'the schools were separate" and 'you can grow up with some ideas about where you are supposed to be in life' as a result of those separate and unequal experiences, that she was well aware, at an early age, of the demand that she be able to move back and forth, in, and between the black and white worlds while 'staying in her place' as a black and as a woman. Thus, marginality and the development of an outsider-within stance are evidenced in Gwen's early life. This suggests that Gwen's early love for and attitudes towards school enabled her to transcend society's attempts to squash her positive identity as a black woman and propel her to educational levels beyond those that were separate and unequal. Hence, her schooling epistemologies, saturated with the existence of knowledge transmitted in the context of race, are shown to have influenced her early and current outsider-within and marginality positions. By attributing her early attitudes to her mother she demonstrates the significance of familial teachings in one's views about school and education.

Traci

Traci, in relaying her views and attitudes towards school, fondly remembered, "I really liked school as a child; I liked doing the work; I liked reading books; I just liked school." Further illustrating her attitude towards school as was transmitted to her by family was her comment:

> It was always a given that I would go to college...the undergraduate degree, as a minimum, was expected.... We never knew how we would finance it but I knew I was going to college.

In looking back on the community's attitude towards education, Traci recalls:

> Within my community it was more a given that if you wanted to do something with your life you had to go to school. People would say, 'that kid is never going to be anything because he didn't finish school.'

Interestingly enough, an analysis of the data failed to reveal passages demonstrating that Traci perceived self as an outsider-within in the environment on the basis of her black womanhood. This inadvertent finding suggests Traci has developed and adheres to a culture of dissemblance, i.e., the creation of the appearance of disclosure, of openness about oneself and one's feelings, while one actually remains an enigma (Collins, 1991). Consistently, Traci's culture of dissemblance is a plausible explanation for the lack of findings that show that she perceives herself as being objectified as the Other in the predominately White institution. However, a relationship may be found to exist between Traci's schooling epistemologies and her outsider-within stance and marginality. Her expressed love and enjoyment of school may plausibly be seen as influencing (lessening) her outsider-within stance in the environment as this stance was not found to be related to perceptions that she is ever objectified as the Other in the environment. Therefore, her outsider-within stance, a consequence of her inability to readily find a 'hairdresser,' or 'brown stockings,' i.e., a perception resulting solely from her Black womanhood and not from her experiences of being objectified as the Other, appears to be reflective of schooling epistemologies absent of racial knowings that would have caused her to go into the white academy expecting to be objectified as the Other. This suggests that Traci's marginality, clearly exceeding that of any other study participant, is also influenced by and is reflective of her schooling epistemologies. For example, in her marginality, Traci demonstrates a level of understanding of whites to the extent that she does not discuss unpleasantries, particularly in the sense of race, racism, or racial differences. This illuminates her ability to construct a sense of self as part of the environment. This observation is consistent with the absence of schooling epistemologies that would have

caused her to be continually aware of, or attentive to any objectification as the Other in the academy on the basis of her Black womanhood. Traci, in her marginality, does not indicate that she perceives herself as an Other in the academy.

Monica

In an expression of her schooling epistemologies, Monica remarks:

> [As] I was growing up [my mother] told me, 'You need to go to school and get your degree' and not ever have to do anything demeaning. 'You can get married, have children...whatever else you want, you can choose that. If you ever want to get up and leave, then you have means to get up and leave....

In this expression Monica indicates that although the importance of education was stressed, it was stressed as a means of attaining self sufficiency and independence. In further defining her attitudes towards school, she states:

> As I was growing up, my parents were always saying, 'It may be hard, but you have to do it....' I have a determination. I think my determination is more aimed at proving to white people that I can do it. And I think that has come from my upbringing.

By making this statement, Monica illustrates that the importance of education was transmitted to her simultaneously with the idea that getting educated would be 'hard,' but that it was a task that must be accomplished at all costs. Also suggested is the transmission of the idea that she would encounter obstacles because she was other than white, hence her aim to show whites her competence. This passage very clearly reflects Monica's parents beliefs, how her parents transmitted those beliefs to Monica, and how those teachings have directly influenced her attitude towards achieving while in the white academy. As she indicated in another conversation that her attitude towards whites in the environment was basically one of 'mistrust,' this further suggests that she entered the doctoral program expecting objectification as an Other and to be considered an 'outsider-within' the environment. Resultantly, we see how Monica's outsider-within stance is reflective of and has been influenced by her attitude towards school in the white

environment as has been transmitted to her by her parents. This finding also suggests that her marginality has also been influenced by her schooling epistemologies since the extent to which she is willing to 'live' (e.g., trust, relax, love) in the white environment may have been influenced by her parents' teachings.

Judy

Judy's mother told her and her sister to "finish your schooling first, before you have a family, because once you have a family it's really hard to finish." This message not only transmitted the importance of education, but it did so in a manner such that education was placed ahead of having a family and children. In further analyzing the data for effects or influences that Judy's schooling epistemologies may have had on her marginality or outsider-within stance in the predominately White institution, one comment in particular became quite significant:

> My mom tried to instill in us the fact that we are not equal, we will never be equal, and not to expect to be equal, and that has really been important to me. I've been doing some reading on how Black children are disserviced by the educational system, starting with kindergarten, all the way up to college and grad school. In knowing...I can't compare myself to my colleagues. They have so much more cultural capital invested in *this* system. That's not my background...I don't have the head start they have.

Although Judy's mother established the importance of education in Judy's life as something that should take priority over having a family and children, her mother still took the time necessary to transmit to Judy the inequalities of life and that she should expect to be treated as an Other in society. Judy's expression of the beliefs transmitted to her by her mother are indicative of the preparation she received to alert her to her Other status in society. Surprisingly, however, she specifically related her 'unequal' status to the status of blacks in the educational arena from 'kindergarten, all the way up to college and graduate school.' According to Judy's comments regarding familial teachings, her family ensured that she was conscious of society's objectification of her as the Other, and of the

importance of receiving an education. She also, in demonstrating her knowledge that because Blacks have traditionally been objectified as the Other even in educational arenas, demonstrated her understanding that she too would continue to be objectified as the Other in the white academy and would therefore, be treated unequally. Confirming her acknowledgment of self in the environment as an Other on the basis of class are her comments regarding her "trust fund baby and young, white, rich" colleagues. Yet Judy indicates that knowing that she was perceived as an Other and would be confronted with racism was "never an obstacle" for her because she believed that she could accomplish whatever she wanted to. It was apparent that her schooling epistemologies have influenced her outsider-within stance as she has accepted the high value placed on education to the extent that feelings of inferiority are held at bay or denied. The acceptance of this idea provides a foundation for Judy's acceptance of familial teachings that she will be objectified as the Other and that she must, in some sense, deal with treatment as the Other so that she is able to control her feelings for as long as it takes to receive an appropriate education. Although her early teachings to the effect that she is not equal serve to assist her in establishing an outsider-within stance, we can clearly see how her outsider-within stance in the academy has been influenced by her attitude towards school and society as has been transmitted to her by her family. Judy, expected to be treated as an unequal, outsider-within the academy. Her familial teachings have instilled in her that although she will never be treated as an equal to whites, she must not allow racism to stop her from achieving her educational goals. Consequently, and not surprisingly, she is compelled to accept this outsider-within status in the predominantly White environment in order to continue in her educational pursuits, success as determined by her family's teachings. Because Judy's outsider-within stance in the predominately White institution has been directly influenced by and is therefore, reflective of her schooling epistemologies, we see that Judy's marginality has also been influenced by her schooling epistemologies. For, in knowing early in life that she would be treated as the

Other in white environments, including school, Judy understood the significance of, not only assuming a certain posture in white dominated environments if she was not to be deterred from the educational goals her parents had transmitted to her, but also of interacting with whites on all levels. Judy's early participation as the only Black in many educationally related activities that took place outside school also confirms the transmission of values to Judy that disclose the importance of marginality. In her reality, one's marginality emerges as directly proportional to one's educational status, even though she has no delusions that she will always be an outsider-within in her marginal and therefore, educated status.

Summary

Each participant expressed an early awareness of the family's expectation that she would attend college. Each participant also expressed her mother's primary role in the transmission of values and attitudes she held and currently holds about school and the importance of education. All participants demonstrated how their ways of knowing were not only saturated with the importance of education but, also with the prominence that society associates with one's race. The demonstration of these two phenomena suggest not only an influence on one's marginality and outsider-within stance as a result of these women's schooling epistemologies, but a direct relationship between the two. With Traci, it appeared that life in a race-centered society was not addressed or used as the basis of relaying the importance of education. That is to say, with Traci, familial teachings regarding race did not permeate the knowledge that her family transmitted to her concerning the importance of education. However, on a deeper level of examination, it became apparent that, through her exhibition and use of dissemblance as a means of promoting marginality and justifying her outsider-within stance in the predominately White institution, Traci recognizes the need to protect herself from objectification as the Other. A culture of dissemblance signifies one's awareness of being objectified as the Other. Hence, all study participants were found with ways of knowing that were not only

saturated with the importance of education, but also with the prominence that society associates with one's race. They therefore, showed how their marginality and outsider-within stances were influenced or reflective of their schooling epistemologies.

Getting Into Character

The second research question explored participants' attitudes and behaviors that indicated they knew and understood the way of life of the majority and the minority as respective dominant and subordinate culture groups. In observing participants, it was clear that they all knew and understood the way of life of the majority as the dominant culture in the predominately White institution through their styles of dress, their use of language-code switching, and through the ease with which they interacted with whites in the environment. Although, in analyzing interview data for each study participant, findings with respect to this research question varied somewhat from participant to participant, several findings were found to be consistent across all cases. Consistent findings were related to participants' responses to social demands and in their development of and ability to maintain a psychic or visceral detachment from the environment.

On stage: Social attitudes and behaviors

The first consistent finding was that although all participants expressed intensified outsider-within feeling when attending institutional/departmental social functions, they all attended. Gwen, in reflecting on her social experiences and feelings of being an outsider-within, explains:

> I can recall times when I have approached people in these groups and attempted to initiate conversation...just some acknowledgment that you are there. The people would actually turn away, or pick up the conversation where it was and leave you out completely. So you just move on to another door. But after a time you get tired....After one or two times, I go and sit by myself and just watch people.

In explaining why she continued to attend these functions, she expressed:

> Because it was expected...it was expected that in this group these are some of the activities in which you will engage, so you go because that is a part...those are the rules of the game.

Judy, in expressing her distaste for these social gatherings indicated that she had witnessed people at parties coming back to the department and "talking about" the behaviors of other whites in attendance. As a consequence, she never felt comfortable relaxing or drinking in the company of this group as she knew she might just be tomorrow's topic of conversation in the department. She perceived that she was always being watched and as a result felt that *she* always had to watch her 'Ps and Qs.'

Monica, indicated, "A lot of the reason I feel so outside is on a social level. I'm an outsider. I don't drink beer...." It was for these reasons Monica especially dreaded study group socials.

Traci, in addressing her social experiences and outsider-within posture in the academy, recalled:

> I have been in social situations where I felt like nobody was talking about anything I was interested in, nobody was there that I wanted to talk to. I asked myself, 'Why am I here?' You say, 'If this is the kind of music they are playing, why am I here? But you feel you are part of the environment, so you feel obligated to be there...at least show your face. Maybe I need to be in this social environment to help learn to appreciate these kinds of things.

Although this passage is indicative of Traci's feelings of alienation, it illustrates my earlier position that Traci's self-definitions will not allow her to attribute her outsider-within feelings to external causes, or to being objectified as the Other by the dominant group. Note that in Traci's perception, there was nobody there that 'she' wanted to talk to and nobody was talking about anything that 'she' wanted to talk about. Not only is dissemblance evidenced in Traci's adherence to the presentation of self as in control of unpleasant situations, it is evidenced by her adherence to a posture that nothing meted out to her in the environment resembles the environmental attempts to objectify her as the Other. According to Traci, "I have never experienced racism here." Traci's experiences,

although not impossible, are at odds with the theoretical tenets of 'black womanhood,' which further suggests that Traci adheres to a strict culture of dissemblance and seldom, if ever, re-moves the mask. As a culture of dissemblence is not reserved exclusively for interaction with whites, I perceive that with me, the black female researcher, Traci chose from time-to-time to don and wear her mask.

In summary, these passages indicate that these women know and understand the majority as the dominant group and the minority as the subordinate group. They also, here again, lend credence to the necessity of wearing the mask while in the white academy. These two points are confirmed by these women's continued attendance at institutional social functions where their outsider-within feelings and positions are intensified. Further, attendance not only acknowledges that they know and understand the 'rules of the game,' but that they are willing to be players in a game wherein they have no say-so in what the rules are. This further validates the notion that the rules are not determined by a subordinate group. If such were the case, these women would not be outsiders-within. They would be insiders. As an insider making the rules, these women would make them to their benefit, as opposed to their continued oppression resulting in the necessity of the mask.

Memorizing the script: Visceral detachment

Another significant finding related to the participants knowledge and understanding of the majority as the dominant group and the minority as the subordinate group was each woman's deliberate progression towards visceral detachment-the act of removing one's inner self, feelings, or psyche from the environment- while remaining physically in the institutional arena (Ward, 1995). Traci, in illustrating the progression of this phenomenon in her existence in the academy, began by sharing her initiation into the white academy as a undergraduate for it was here that she realized that she could be "an island" or she could "develop some camaraderie" in the environment. Deciding to "develop camaraderie," she entered her doctoral program with the posture of

"introducing" herself by giving everybody the benefit of the doubt. She says, "I came in with an open mind...." Somewhere along the way, Traci decided that being an island might not be so bad. She commented, "You can be by yourself and be happy." In discussing her transition from her 'I'm a great person-you should like me' attitude to her 'frankly, I don't give a damn-if you like me or not' attitude,' she pointed out that in the beginning, she would take it as a "personal affront if somebody didn't like" her. Now, she remarks, "This is me. You like me, fine. You don't, that's the way it goes. But I'm not going to change twenty times over to try to be your image of what you think I ought to be or what you want me to be." Consistently, when illustrating the distance she has been able to place between her inner self and the environment, she commented, "I guess my attitude now is expect nothing and you won't be disappointed. If something comes up, you'll be pleasantly surprised."

Gwen's attitude of detachment was one that she developed, as a result of segregation, early in life. However, its presence in the academy clearly demonstrates her knowledge and understanding of the majority as the dominant group and the minority as the subordinate group. For example, when in a class where she was the only black, a professor drew her aside and told her that she didn't have to respond with so much information and that she might want to let others participant some. She recalled, "I was offended but I decided I was not going to let that affect me, I continued to attend the class. It just caused me to not participate." In this illustration, Gwen clearly exhibits outsider-within feelings associated with being one of a subordinate group. She also confirmed her aptness in detaching herself viscerally from the environment, and the necessity of a posture of visceral detachment. She displays in her outsider-within status her understanding of the dominant group's desire that she, in essence, become invisible. To acknowledge understanding of the professor's request, Gwen as the minority and subordinate, acquiesced. Further suggestive of the necessity of distancing one's self from the dominant environment and its' ability to oppress is Gwen's declaration, "I...rely on

myself to do what needs to be done." Gwen demonstrates her determination to do what needs to be done, making the right choice, i.e., accepting the only choice she had, when faced with 'you might want to let others participate some,' by ceasing to participate in class.'

Monica, in demonstrating her attitude of visceral detachment in an acknowledgment of her understanding of the majority group as the dominant group, tells quite an interesting story. Before she entered her doctoral program, she was actively recruited by a professor from the institution. This professor sweet talked her into the arms of the institution by promising to work closely with her, commit time to her progress, and teach her to write grant proposals. She remembers, "That was the only expectation I had. That this professor was going to train me so that when I got out of here I would be ready." After entering the institution, Monica found that to expect anything from the professor that recruited her, was to expect too much. She found that he was not working with or teaching her. She stated, "All you would get out of him. was 'go think about it some more.'" After attending a conference of her peers and observing their research, she acknowledged that if anyone were to look at the research she was doing, they would say, "This is really just crap." Then, progressing towards visceral detachment, she self-examined and determined:

> I'm not learning anything, I'm not doing anything, I'm not developing in any way, so I really ought to get out of my advisory group. It's going to cost me time, but I really have to get out. My self esteem was low...the whole works. I thought, this is just not working out, so I switched groups, and I'm glad.

The decision to switch groups was not a decision that Monica really *had* to make. Inherent in the predominately White academy's rules, is the cognition that those 'other than' the majority are to be objectified as such. Monica, aware of this, could not afford to have her 'objectification as the Other' already on the basis of her Black womanhood, substantiated and extended to include her academic performance. Although Monica

indicates that now, in her new group, she is learning a lot and feels better about where she is in her program, she states that of her new, current advisor, *"I have no expectations."* Hence, through her process of visceral detachment, Monica indicates that she knows and understands the life of the majority as the dominant group and the minority as the subordinate group.

Judy also demonstrated that she knew and understood the life of the majority as the dominant and minority as the subordinate groups through visceral detachment. In one conversation wherein she was describing the white academy, her attitude of detachment emerged. She stated:

> Its' southern...it's rich...it's racist...it's white...it's college! It's about young, rich, white, kids who have grown up in a certain environment, who are pretty much still in that environment and who will continue to live in that same environment.

Not only does this passage give insight into Judy's attitude of detachment, necessitated by her perception of self as 'other than' rich, racist, and White, it exudes a sense of self resignation to the idea of being an Other in the environment. Judy's comment clearly show that she is aware of the majority group as the dominant group in terms of its richness, its whiteness, and its ability to oppress and objectify one on the basis of race, which all simply serve, in her estimation, to symbolize 'college.' Her attitude of visceral detachment is also personified by her lightness of her tone and attitude when she so eloquently uses each adjective to clarify the noun, college.

Judy's resignation to self as a subordinate is further illuminated in her comment, "I go out of my way to not be threatening...you see me, you see dark skin..." This statement implies that she sees herself as being perceived as one that is other than '*not* dark' or white. In her reality, this perception recognizes the self administered invisibility she must induce to appear 'not threatening.' All women suggested that to induces one's self invisible, is more palatable than being rendered invisible by the environment. Yet, the effects in either case are the same: an annihilation of the humanness and individuality of

the Black woman because of her objectification as the Other. Again, we see the necessity of the mask.

In summary, these passages indicate that these women know and understand the majority as the dominant group and the minority (themselves) as the subordinate group. This knowledge and understanding is confirmed by their efforts to viscerally detach themselves from the environment. Visceral detachment makes these women less vulnerable to the environment's devaluation of their blackness and womanhood. Also interesting is that visceral detachment appears in some instances as a self-induced form of invisibility. Yet, it may be one of the few strategies available to these women if they are to be able ignore being objectified as the other in the white academy. Visceral detachment appears to also provide these women opportunities to rid themselves of the belief that objectification as a personal affront. This is extremely significant as the personal identity is one formed by each woman's perspective and reality as forged by the images of black womanhood and the tradition of uplifting the race. These women, by refusing to continue to leave their inner selves open for devaluation and objectification, display an inherent knowledge of the imperativeness of distancing herself from oppression and of protecting the sanctity of the inner self.

Unmasked: The Discussion

The most illuminating finding of this study was the extent to which participants illustrated the personal strength for perseverance that come from self-definitions. All participants demonstrated the significance of self-definition in their attempts to sustain themselves in the academy. Clearly, participants' persistence in the constant process of forging, reconstructing, and reinforcing self-definitions gives credence to Collins (1986) statement:

> Self-definition involves challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally-defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood. The insistence on Black female self-

> definition reframes the entire dialogue from one of determining the technical accuracy of an image, to one stressing the power dynamics underlying the very process of definition itself. (p. 526-517)

The data suggests that participants' self- and familial constructed knowledge of self are the tools that have worked to enforce confidence in their ability to perform academic tasks, to ensure psychological and emotional survival in hostile social settings, and to provide these women with a tolerance to develop an understanding of the culture and characteristics of the dominant group. In this sense, their methods of asserting constructed knowledge of self, self-definition, materialized as the cornerstones of these women's marginality in terms of their ability to enter and survive in the social and cultural groups of whites. As these women continually move back and forth, in, and between their own social and cultural groups and those of others, self-definition must be presented daily and in a manner such that the dominant culture group, who does not want to see beneath the mask, does not have to face the undisguised effects if its attitudes and practices.

Participants also demonstrated that the genesis of the content of self-definition is fostered in the home through familial teachings. In this study, these teachings came primarily the mother, although participants were all from two parent homes. This supports Collins (1986) comment, 'Self-valuation stresses the content of black women's self-definitions, namely, replacing externally-derived images with authentic black female images" (p. 517). Consistently, study participants used the positive, authentic images of their mothers to replace externally-derived imaged of black womanhood.

Also, participants supported the notion that what their parents transmitted to them early in life, in the context of race, has had a direct impact on their conceptions of self and their marginality while in the white institution. All participants, with the exception of Traci demonstrated having preconceived notions about whites upon entry into the environment. These pre-judgments, although they appeared to have prepared these

women to be confronted with being objectified as the Other, also appeared to cause these women to invest time and brain power in deciphering the subtle and not-so-subtle messages they were receiving from the environment. Traci, the only participant who did not express any schooling epistemologies transmitted in the context of race, appeared to have the least problems associated with her ability to transcend the social and cultural groups of her race and move in and between the social and cultural groups of whites in the environment. Traci also demonstrated the least amount of concern for any devaluation while in the environment. In addition, Traci responded that if the environment was singling her out, or treating her as an 'other," then she was either "too stupid" to see it, or the method of objectification as the Other was so sophisticated that it was going right over her head. Consequently, it is not surprising that she didn't or couldn't invest time or energy thinking about any objectification in the environment as the Other. In this sense, the obvious, logical solution would appear to be to challenge African American parents not to teach their female children the virtues of education, schooling, and life in the context of race. Therefore, logically, they would not expect to be victims of racism or to be treated as different than whites in the environment. However, as perceptions of being objectified as the Other emerged for these women as a reality in the institution, how does a concerned Black parent *not* teach his/her children the importance of schooling and education in the context of race, and its significance in society? According to Cose (1993):

> No sane parent wishes to expose a child to hurtful insults and gratuitous pain. Yet for African-American parents, the normal impulse to nurture and protect their children can land them on the horns of a dilemma: whether to expose the children to racial prejudice so they will be better able to fight it, or to prepare them for a world in which race is not an issue-which is to say, for a world that may not exist. (p. 135)

In closing, the black female doctoral candidate is making great strides in the white academy and employing various sustaining traits that have not been addressed in the existing literature. Some observers might argue the value of these beliefs as history-based sustaining traits to those who use them as sustenance for success. Others could easily question their credibility and transferability. But such queries may well stem from a failure to understand the intransigence of these beliefs to the women who hold them. Until the depths of these personal sources and resources can be fathomed, its doubtful that any white academy can be truly sensitized despite the fact that these women, through the use of self- and familial-constructed knowledge, self-definition, visceral detachment, and familial schooling epistemologies, to name a few sustaining traits, are actively engaged in the process of storming and conquering the ivory tower.

Ironically, the mask, is a fitting battle garment as it serves to protect, shield, and cloak the wearer. The travesty lies in the fact that because the donning and wearing of the mask is perceived as necessary for survival to black women in the academy, the dominant culture group is denied the opportunity to experience, first hand, the uniqueness, expanse, and beauty of the dimensions of black womanhood.

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